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HON. JAMES H. MILLER.

TO WHOSE INITIATIVE AND LABORS IN THE ILLINOIS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY MUST BE LARGELY CREDITED THE CREATION OF
THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL LIBRARY.

By William R. Sandham, Wyoming, Ill.

The Illinois State Historical Society is doing a great amount of good work and a kind that will be greatly appreciated as time goes on. Among some of the most important is the publication of the papers on the "Forgotten Statesmen of Illinois." It is a work that is highly commendable and should be continued as it doubtless will be.

Though a statesman may do some noble work which is a benefit to the State and country, he is very soon forgotten and only the result of his work lives. The man remains forgotten unless a record of him and his work be made by the State Historical Society.

To rescue from forgetfulness the life record of Hon. James H. Miller, who was "the gentleman from Stark county" in the Illinois House of Representatives from January 7, 1885, to the time of his death, June 27, 1890, is the object of this paper, and to put it on record in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, so that all who are interested in our State history now and hereafter, may learn and remember something of the man who laid the foundation of the Illinois State Historical Library, which led to the organization of the Illinois State Historical Society.

James Hughes Miller was born at Marseilles, Wyandotte county, Ohio, August 29, 1843. His parents were



JAMES H. MILLER.

Allen Cowen and Mary Pierson Miller, who were natives of Pennsylvania, the father living in Ohio eleven years and the mother twenty-five. The father graduated from the Western Theological Seminary in 1840 and was ordained a Presbyterian minister the same year. He was pastor of the Presbyterian church at Marseilles for about eight years. The family came to Illinois in 1851 and settled in Winnebago county, and a year later moved to White Rock in Ogle county, where the father was pastor of the Presbyterian church for nine years, during which time he organized the Presbyterian church at Rochelle.

It was at White Rock that James H. Miller grew to manhood. He was educated in the public school and later at a private collegiate institute at Mendota, in LaSalle county. In the early part of 1861 he became a teacher in LaSalle county, and during vacation time clerked for a coal merchant.

In the fall of 1862 he enlisted, and though only nineteen years old, he was authorized to recruit a company for the Fourteenth Illinois Cavalry. The men he recruited were mustered into the United States service in January, 1863, but owing to a severe injury which befell the young recruiting officer, he was not accepted. His parents moved to Stark county in 1861, to which place he followed them in April, 1863, hoping by home care to speedily recover from his injury. Instead of recovery he was, as a result of his injury, attacked with that serious malady, hip disease.. For over six years he was an invalid, even having to use crutches up to 1869.

From his early boyhood Mr. Miller was a worker, and to satisfy his great desire to be doing something during his illness he studied law. The interest and knowledge which this study gave him led to his taking up the vocation of a lawyer for his life work. He was licensed to practice law by the Illinois State Supreme Court in the spring of 1869, and soon after opened an office in Toulon,

the county seat of Stark county, and immediately entered into a good practice.

In the early part of 1872 he was appointed State's Attorney for Stark county to fill a vacancy, and on November 5th of that year he was elected to that office for the full term of four years. Later he was the attorney for the village of Toulon for several years.

At the election in November, 1884, Mr. Miller was elected one of the members of the Illinois House of Representatives from the district composed of Bureau, Putnam and Stark counties. He entered on his legislative duties January 7, 1885, and soon took a leading rank in the Illinois General Assembly. He was made a member of the following committees: Judiciary, Judicial Department, and Elections. He was also a member of the Republican Steering Committee, during that memorable campaign which resulted in the election of Hon. John A. Logan to the United States senate. It was during this session of the Illinois General Assembly that there was passed the first law relating to elections in Chicago. At the request of the Chicago Citizens' Association, Mr. Miller was selected to push its passage through the House of Representatives. The Chicago Legal News of May 1, 1886, had the following to say of his work for the law: "Among the men who aided in the passage of the new election law, none are entitled to more credit than Hon. James H. Miller, of Toulon, for his disinterested efforts put forth in its behalf. By vote, speech and influence he did all in his power to secure its passage. He made the strongest and most eloquent argument in the House in favor of its passage. When the act became a law and its validity was assailed in the State Supreme Court, he followed it there, and without hope of fee or reward, he made a strong and eloquent appeal to the Court in its behalf."

In November, 1886, Mr. Miller was again elected a member of the Illinois House of Representatives, and

took his seat January 5, 1887. He took even a more active part in this 35th General Assembly than he did in the 34th. As the record made in the House Journal of that session shows, the work of no member was more efficient than his. He was made chairman of the Judiciary Committee, a place next to the Speaker, the most important in the Illinois House of Representatives. He was also a member of the following committees: Federal Relations, Fees and Salaries, State and Municipal Indebtedness, and several important special committees.

In November, 1888, Mr. Miller was elected for the third time a member of the Illinois House of Representatives. He took his seat January 9, 1889, and for a second time was made chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and a member of the following committees: Rules, Claims, Municipal and State Indebtedness. On February 13, 1889, on account of the absence of the Speaker, he was appointed temporary Speaker for three days. On May 10, 1889, on account of the resignation of Speaker Asa C. Matthews, Mr. Miller was elected Speaker for the remainder of the term.

When Mr. Miller was first elected a member of the Illinois General Assembly in 1884, he began the study of parliamentary law and continued to study it until the time he was elected Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives. This, with his good knowledge of human nature, enabled him to fulfill the arduous duties of the office to which he was now elected with ability and impartiality.

Soon after Mr. Miller assumed his active duties as a legislator he became deeply interested in Illinois history and this interest continued to grow to the time of his death. The writer of this paper became interested in Illinois history about the same time, and began the study of it so as to be able to tell something about it to the boys and girls in the schools which I was then visiting every

day. Whenever we met we compared notes. It was not long before we came to the conclusion that the great need of students of Illinois history was a State historical library located at Springfield. Mr. Miller became very enthusiastic over the idea, and as a result he formulated the following bill, which he introduced in the House of Representatives February 16, 1889:

WHEREAS, It is important and desirable that all books, pamphlets and other printed matter, manuscripts, monographs and other writings, illustrative and descriptive of the history of the State, be collected and preserved in some permanent form, before it is too late to rescue from oblivion the memory of its earlier history, and those who founded it, as well as those who have been connected with its rise and progress in later days, therefore,

AN ACT to establish the Illinois State Historical Library, and to provide for its care and maintenance, and to make appropriations therefor.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:* That there is hereby established at the capital of the State, a historical library, which shall be known as the "Illinois State Historical Library."

§ 2. The north ante-room of the State library rooms in the State House shall be set apart for the use of the State historical library, and free access thereto at all reasonable hours shall be forever had and maintained.

§ 3. The Illinois State historical library shall be under the control and management of three trustees well versed in the history of the State, and qualified by habit and disposition to discharge the duties of their office, who shall be chosen and appointed by the Governor by and with the consent of the Senate, for the term of two years, and until their successors have been appointed and commissioned. The said trustees shall receive no

compensation for their services, except for their actual expenses while in the discharge of their official duties, to be paid upon itemized accounts approved by the Governor.

§ 4. The said trustees shall have power, and they are hereby required to make all necessary rules, regulations and by-laws not inconsistent with law, to carry into effect the purposes of this act, and to procure from time to time, as may be possible and practicable at reasonable cost, all books, pamphlets, manuscripts, monographs, writings and other materials of historical interest and useful to the historian, bearing upon the political, physical, religious or social history of the state of Illinois from the earliest known period of time. They shall also have the power to select some person having the requisite qualifications as librarian and to fix the salary, not, however, to exceed the sum of five hundred dollars per annum.

§ 5. For the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act, the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars per annum is hereby appropriated out of any moneys in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, and the Auditor is authorized to draw his warrant therefor, payable to the order of the trustees of the "Illinois State Historical Library," upon proper vouchers, approved by the Governor.

The bill was referred to the Committee on History, Geology and Science. This committee, on March 7, 1889, recommended that the bill do pass. It was then referred to the Committee on Appropriations, and on April 18, 1889, this committee recommended that the bill do pass. On May 7, 1889, the bill was passed by the House, the vote being 86 for and 19 against its passage. The bill was passed by the Senate May 22, and became a law by the signature of the Governor, May 25, 1889.

Mr. Miller planned during his second term in the General Assembly to introduce a bill in the House for the

creation of a State historical library, but he found that there was too much opposition to overcome among the members of the House. Even when the bill was introduced the opposition was very strong.

Of all the bills introduced by Mr. Miller while a member of the General Assembly, the State Historical Library bill was the one for which he cared the most and the one for which he worked the hardest to make it become a law. By this time he had become a man of considerable influence in the General Assembly, and he used this influence for all it was worth in behalf of the State Historical Library. He wrote to every person in the State of whom he could hear as being interested in Illinois history, requesting them to ask the members of the Senate and House from their districts to vote for the bill creating a State historical library. The opposition in the Committee on Appropriations was at first quite pronounced. This Mr. Miller overcame by a personal appeal to each member of the committee and by addressing the committee as a whole. The writer was in Springfield during that time and Mr. Miller asked me to meet the committee with him and give my opinion of the need of a State historical library. After doing so in my feeble way, Mr. Miller addressed the committee, making a very effective and convincing argument, which I thought at the time and still so think, made the committee believe that the proper thing to do was to recommend that the bill do pass.

Soon after the Governor signed the bill he appointed as trustees, Judge Hiram W. Beckwith of Danville; Arthur Edwards, of Chicago, and Edward F. Leonard, of Peoria, and the trustees appointed Miss Josephine P. Cleveland, librarian. The library was started November 25, 1889, with 442 books and pamphlets relating to the history of Illinois and the Mississippi Valley, which were received from the Secretary of State. The work of gathering and systematically arranging the ma-

terial for which the library was created, was commenced immediately, and it has so successfully been carried on that at the present time there are in the library over 28,000 books and pamphlets and the number is rapidly increasing. Miss Cleveland died in November, 1897, and Mrs. Jessie Palmer Weber became librarian January 1, 1898.

As a direct result of the creation of the Illinois State Historical Library, the Illinois State Historical Society was organized in May, 1899, and it also has its headquarters in Springfield, and has for its Secretary the Librarian of the State historical library.

At its session in 1903, the Illinois General Assembly passed an act which made the State historical society a department of the State historical library.

The creation of the State historical library in 1889, and the uniting with it of the State historical society in 1903, makes possible such valuable work as has been done by Prof. Evarts B. Greene and Prof. C. W. Alvord of the University of Illinois, and of Prof. Edwin E. Sparks, late of the University of Chicago, and others, which has resulted in the publication by the trustees of the State Historical Library of the valuable series of Illinois Historical Collections, among them the 600 page volume on the Lincoln and Douglas Debates.

In the early part of the year 1890, Mr. Miller was chairman of a committee of the General Assembly that went on a tour of inspection to the various penal and reformatory institutions in the eastern states. While at Huntington, Pennsylvania, he was taken with an attack of la grippe and lay seriously ill at the reformatory at that place for several weeks, and from which he recovered very slowly. In June, on account of the slow improvement of his health, he was advised by his physicians to go to the mountains in Colorado. When he started he was full of hope, but he was doomed to disappointment.

A week after his arrival at Manitou, Colorado, he was taken suddenly with hemorrhage of the lungs and died in less than an hour, June 27, 1890, aged 46 years, 9 months and 29 days. He was laid to rest beside his parents and second son in the beautiful cemetery in Toulon, which place was his home for 27 years. His greatest monument is the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield.

Mr. Miller was married to Miss Emma M. Kearney, October 11, 1870. Mrs. Miller was a woman of high social qualities, and earnest in the higher duties of women. She died July 11, 1909. Mr. and Mrs. Miller had four sons. Wilfred D., the eldest, and Harry H., the youngest, are married and live in Toulon. The second son, Allen W., died in infancy, and the third, George G., died in April, 1900.

The following is a small part of what was said of Mr. Miller at the time of death:

Stark County Sentinel: "Mr. Miller had become a man of marked ability. His power and influence were well recognized. He was truly an eminent leader in the Republican party and in him the party has lost one of its most ardent and efficient supporters. The principles he believed to be right and true were never sacrificed for bribes or for the sake of gain."

Wyoming Post-Herald: "Mr. Miller was one of the most remarkable men Stark county has produced.

Chicago Times: "Mr. Miller was a painstaking legislator and was probably the ablest constitutional lawyer in the House of Representatives. He took pride in mastering the details of every bill recommended for passage, and if it contained a single defect he would surely detect it. He was a leader on the Republican side, but he had the highest respect of his Democratic associates."

Hon. Joseph W. Fifer, then Governor of Illinois, said: "As a member of the General Assembly Mr. Miller was a

leader among his brethren and this too, notwithstanding the fact that he was continually waging a fearful contest with an unyielding disease. In the public service he was always true to duty, never careless, negligent nor inconsiderate. He was able, conscientious and honest. In his death Illinois loses one of her worthiest sons."

The writer of this paper was intimately acquainted with Mr. Miller from 1873 to the time of his death, and during that time I never heard any one speak ill of him, and I never heard Mr. Miller speak ill of others. We often hear it said that we should say nothing but good of the dead. Mr. Miller made it a rule never to say anything but good of the living.